

Spring is getting warmer, but frost is a threat

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Average spring temperatures across the UK have risen by approximately 1 °C over the last few decades according to data released by the Met Office, but gardeners are urged to take note that spring frosts can still pose a threat.

Frosts feature in the forecast for Easter weekend in parts of the UK.

According to statistics the average temperature for meteorological spring (March, April and May) across the UK was 7.1 °C between 1961–1990, but between 2007–2016 this had risen to 8.1 °C.

Average spring temperature	1961–1990 average	1981–2010 average	2007–2016 average
UK	7.1 °C	7.7 °C	8.1 °C
England	7.8°C	8.5°C	8.9 °C
Wales	7.3°C	8.0°C	8.3 °C
Scotland	5.8°C	6.3°C	6.8 °C
Northern Ireland	7.3°C	7.9°C	8.2 °C

Dr Mark McCarthy is the head of the Met Office’s National Climate Information Centre. Commenting on the changes in average spring temperatures, he said: “Within many people’s lifetimes, spring in the UK has become appreciably warmer. The average spring temperature across the UK has risen by about 1 °C and the number of days recording grass frost has fallen slightly, particularly for Scotland.

“Although the number of frost days in spring has fallen, it can still be an issue right through spring across most of the UK. We have seen relatively few widespread frosts so far this year, but this Easter weekend gardeners in rural areas, especially in northern Britain, caring for tender plants may encounter a ground frost.”

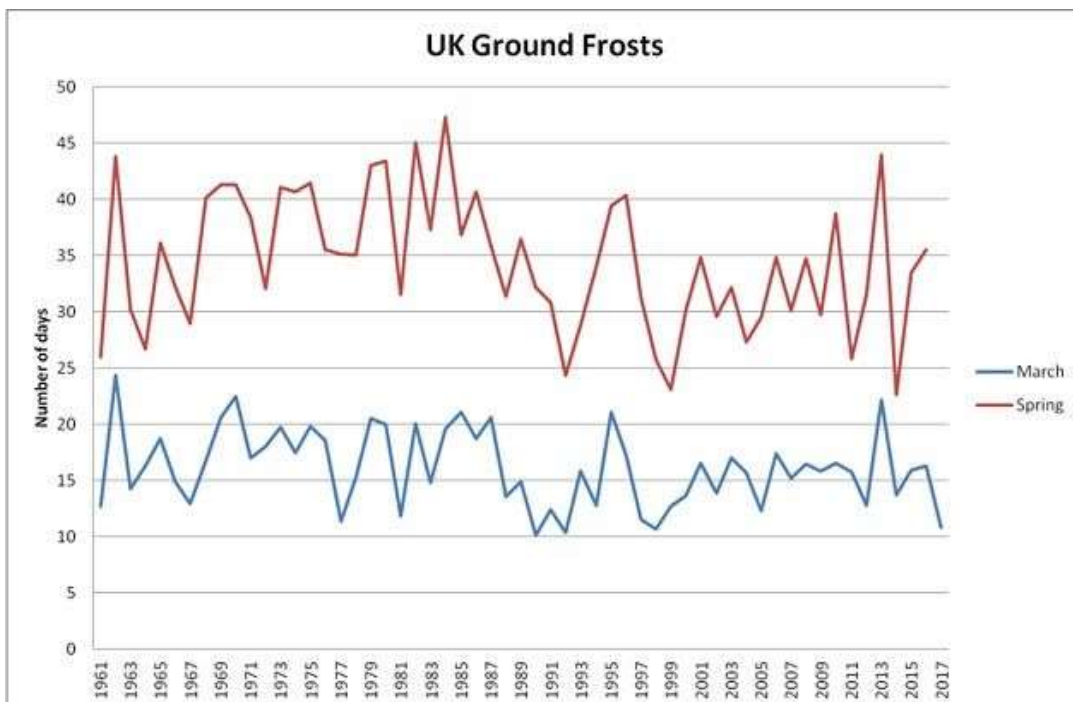
Days of spring ground frost	1961–1990 average	1981–2010 average	2007–2016 average
UK	37	34	33
England	34	32	32
Wales	34	32	32
Scotland	42	39	34
Northern Ireland	35	30	33

Guy Barter is the Chief Horticultural Advisor at the RHS. He said: “Spring frosts have two effects: one is to damage young plants and newly-emerged flowers and leaves; the other is to kill tender plants, such as sweetcorn and courgettes, which are only grown outdoors in the period from the last to first frosts – usually from mid-May to late September in the south.



“Until the last frost, however, gardeners watch the weather forecast closely, ready to dash out and cover vulnerable plants with newspaper or horticultural fleece if a night frost threatens.

“Garden centres anticipate record sales this Easter holiday and gardeners should be ready to act to protect their new plants for the next month.”



In a UK series stretching back to 1961, 1984 recorded the most spring frosts, with 47 frost days. 2014, with 23 frost days in spring, recorded the fewest.

The UK mean spring temperatures since 1910, reveal the three warmest springs have occurred in the last ten years: 2011, 2014 and 2007. In 2011, the average UK spring temperature was 9.2 °C. Of the top ten warmest springs since 1910, five have occurred since 2000.



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